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ABSTRACT

A study explored whether recipients of graduate fellowships through the Family and Consumer Sciences Education Graduate Fellowship Fund become leaders in family and consumer sciences education. The usable sample consisted of 51 of 64 recipients from 1969-97; 29 responded to a mailed 2-part survey, Impact of the Fellowship Questionnaire and The Personal and Professional Characteristics Questionnaire. Content analysis of qualitative data was conducted. Findings were as follows: 100 percent of respondents were female; 96.6 percent were Caucasian, 3.4 percent African-American; after receiving the fellowship, recipients averaged 2.5 years to complete their degree program, with a range of 9 months to 6 years; and over one-half were currently in a university position. Recipients' involvement with the fellowship included encouraging others to apply, contributing money toward a Roll of Honor nominee, and nominating someone. They were active in professional organizations and reported the fellowship gave them financial support to obtain a degree and offered encouragement by demonstrating the profession's commitment to development of future leaders. Three themes emerged as types of impact on careers: developing a stronger personal commitment to the profession, gaining confidence from receiving the fellowship, and connecting with other family and consumer sciences education professionals. (Three charts are appended.) (YLB)

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Legacy of Leadership: American Vocational Association Family and Consumer Sciences Education Graduate Fellowship

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A Vail
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In 1960, the Family and Consumer Sciences Division of the American Vocational Association initiated a Family and Consumer Sciences Education Awards and Graduate Fellowship Program. The awards portion of the program focused on honoring outstanding family and consumer sciences professionals. The purpose of the fellowship program was to provide fellowships to family and consumer sciences educators–graduate students who would become future leaders in the profession.

Family and consumer sciences education professionals honor their colleagues through contributions to the Graduate Fellowship Fund. Names of these persons are inscribed on the Fellowship Roll of Honor. You can find a list of these names in the brochure you received when you came in the door. Placement on the Fellowship Roll of Honor is the highest honor within family and consumer sciences education and recognizes those professionals who have made significant contributions to the field. Since its inception, the fund has received over $170,000 in contributions. Since 1961, ninety-four professionals have been placed on the Roll of Honor. If any of the people on the Roll of Honor are here, would they please stand to be recognized?

Beginning in 1967, graduate fellowships have been awarded through the Family and Consumer Sciences Education Graduate Fellowship Fund. To date, sixty-four family and consumer sciences educators have received graduate fellowships. Many current, past, and future leaders are among the recipients. As of 1997, $171,000 has been awarded. If any of the recipients of the fellowship are here would they please stand?

Since the inception of the Graduate Fellowship Program, no follow-up of fellowship recipients has been undertaken. The stated purpose of the fellowship is to contribute to the preparation of future leaders in family and consumer sciences education. The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not recipients have in fact become leaders in family and consumer sciences education. This study was guided by two objectives: 1) to

identify the personal and professional characteristics of the fellowship recipients; and 2) to ascertain the impact of the fellowship on the recipients.

The design of this study was descriptive. The population of the study was the sixty-four fellowship recipients from 1969 to 1997. The population frame was obtained from the American Vocational Association Family and Consumer Sciences Division Graduate Fellowship records. Of the previous recipients, one is deceased and eight could not be located. The four 1997 recipients were not included in the study population because of their early stage in the doctoral program. The usable sample of the population consisted of fifty-one fellowship recipients of which six were identified as minority fellowship recipients. Twenty-nine of these recipients responded to the mail survey for a response rate of 56.9%.

The instrumentation consisted of two questionnaires. The Impact of the Fellowship Questionnaire was used to assess the influence the fellowship had on the recipients' lives. The Personal and Professional Characteristics Questionnaire was used to assess personal and professional characteristics of the recipients.

Data were collected by a mailed survey. Reminders were sent one month after initial mailing. The statistics were analyzed using the SPSS statistical analysis program. Frequencies were calculated for each variable of interest. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data.

In terms of personal characteristics, 100% of the respondents were female; 96.6% were Caucasian and 3.4% were African-American. Most recipients were married (72.4%), followed by single (20.7%), divorced (3.4%), and widowed (3.4%). The mean age of the respondents was 49.1 years. After receiving the fellowship, recipients averaged 2.5 years needed to complete their degree program. The range for time to degree completion was nine months to six years.

The recipients were asked the position in which they were currently employed. As you can see from the pie chart, over ½ of the respondents were currently in a university position.

After receiving the fellowship, respondents' involvement with the fellowship included: encouraged others to submit an application (79.3%); contributed money toward a Roll of Honor nominee (51.7%); and nominated an individual for the Roll of Honor (20.7%).

The respondents reported being active in professional organizations. They were specifically asked to identify their membership status related to seven organizations affiliated with family and consumer sciences education. This bar graph shows that over 4 out of 5 respondents have membership in the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences and the American Vocational Association. Respondents also provided information on additional organizations in which they were involved. The mean number of memberships in additional organizations was 2.14. Combining all organizational memberships, the mean number of memberships per recipient was 4.79.

Themes of the open-ended questions from the respondents' replies were identified. Recipients were asked to describe the ways in which the Family and Consumer Sciences Graduate Fellowship assisted them in obtaining a degree. Financial support was the first theme to be identified. All described the many expenses they covered with their fellowship grant including tuition, computer purchase, and dissertation costs. Some indicated they were able to conduct research with greater breadth and depth due to the additional financial support. The following quote illustrates the financial support role of the fellowship in the completion of their degree

> Provided me with the financial support to carry out a complex research study. Without this initial research, I would not have been able to enter a faculty position already up and running with a research agenda (Recipient 11).

Another important contribution the fellowship made toward degree completion was that it offered encouragement by demonstrating to the recipient the commitment of the profession to the development of its future leaders.

> First of all, this award gave me confidence in continuing my research. It helped me to identify with the profession and continue my commitment to an area that is critically important. This award was an affirmation to me that what I am doing is worthwhile and may become a significant contribution to our profession (Recipient 17).

In another question, the recipients were asked to describe the impact of the fellowship on their career. Three themes emerged as types of impact on their career: 1) developed a stronger personal commitment to the profession; 2) gained confidence from receiving the fellowship; and 3) provided an avenue to connect with other family and consumer sciences education professionals.

In terms of personal commitment to the profession, several recipients highlighted the prestige and responsibility that comes from receiving the fellowship.

> It was a tremendous honor. It gave me encouragement and support from a wonderful organization. It reinforced my commitment to family and consumer sciences education (Recipient 35).

The fellowship increased recipients confidence in their professional work and served as a "launching pad" for future professional involvement.

> I saw it as a big honor and was recognized by colleagues for having received it. I had mentors who were active with the fellowship and I became an active contributor and chaired the committee. I feel I became more involved with family and consumer sciences education as a result of receiving it. The fellowship helped put me on a "professional launching pad" and gave me "wings" (Recipient 20).

Other fellowship recipients identified connecting with family and consumer sciences professionals as an important impact of receiving the fellowship.

> The type of study I was able to conduct gave me contact with all family and consumer sciences teacher educators and state supervisors across the nation. I was able to use this as a base for developing mentors all across the nation (Recipient 16).

Fellowship recipients identified numerous people who influenced them most during their graduate program. Not surprisingly, they identified major professors, committee members, and fellow graduate students as having the most influence on them. Many respondents listed more than one person.

> [Committee member]. She was not my official advisor but I obtained more advice from her than any other person. She was on my exam committee and taught several of my classes. She was a good model for teaching and for dealing with

professional colleagues and advisees. She combines warmth and empathy with high standards for students. She is assertive and principled. She integrates teaching, scholarship, and service in mutually supportive ways and balances them with a personal life. She handles stress well, uses humor, is well organized, and creative (Recipient 28).

My graduate advisor and the other doctoral students my advisor had at the same time I was going through the program. My advisor was an extremely kind and gentle woman who was an outstanding educator and researcher. She was patient, allowing me to travel down many theoretical paths before coaching me on ones that might be more productive than others. She drew examples from research published in a wide variety of social sciences field to provide instructional materials and to demonstrate how the questions we asked in our research could be grounded in more basic social science questions (Recipient 43).

Definitely, my doctoral advisor! She was my teacher, advisor, personal friend and coach. Also, I became very close to the other faculty in our department. As a graduate assistant/teaching assistant, I was included in so many department/college activities. It was a wonderful training ground, both professionally and personally. Even though I was a graduate student in my late/middle 20's, I felt I was treated as a faculty member with privileges and responsibilities. My doctoral advisor was easily accessible, a warm and caring individual, a superb teacher in the classroom, energetic and enthusiastic, and extremely open to new ideas. She helped me make contacts with other faculty in

other colleges on campus and provided many research opportunities for me to assist with as well as writing opportunities (Recipient 46).

These quotes provide evidence of the leadership qualities and skills that encouraged and aided the recipients in becoming leaders. Recipients described their contributions made to both their professional and personal lives. Advisors and colleagues of fellowship recipients can be proud of the influence they have exercised.

In summary, the fellowship has enabled future family and consumer sciences educators to pursue leadership opportunities in local, state, and national levels. The fellowship provides recipients funding for their dissertation research, offers recognition, and builds connections within the profession, but its most important contribution may be the recognition it gives future leaders. From the words of the fellowship recipients, we conclude that the fellowship has met the expectations of those far-sighted professionals who initiated it in 1960. A significant pool of family and consumer sciences education leaders has emerged from graduate students in family and consumer sciences education. They have made contributions to the field which have enabled us collectively to move forward and advance our mission of improving the quality of individual and family life.

In conclusion, as we prepare to enter the new millennium, family and consumer sciences education leaders are needed more than ever before. Changes in families, communities, and other social institutions provide numerous opportunities for family and consumer sciences education professionals to continue our service to and on behalf of families. As we move forward, the Graduate Fellowship has an important role to play in enabling future leaders to emerge and develop to fulfill the mission of family and consumer sciences. It establishes a strong foundation for tomorrow's leaders to interact with and learn from current leaders and to build strong family and consumer sciences programs for

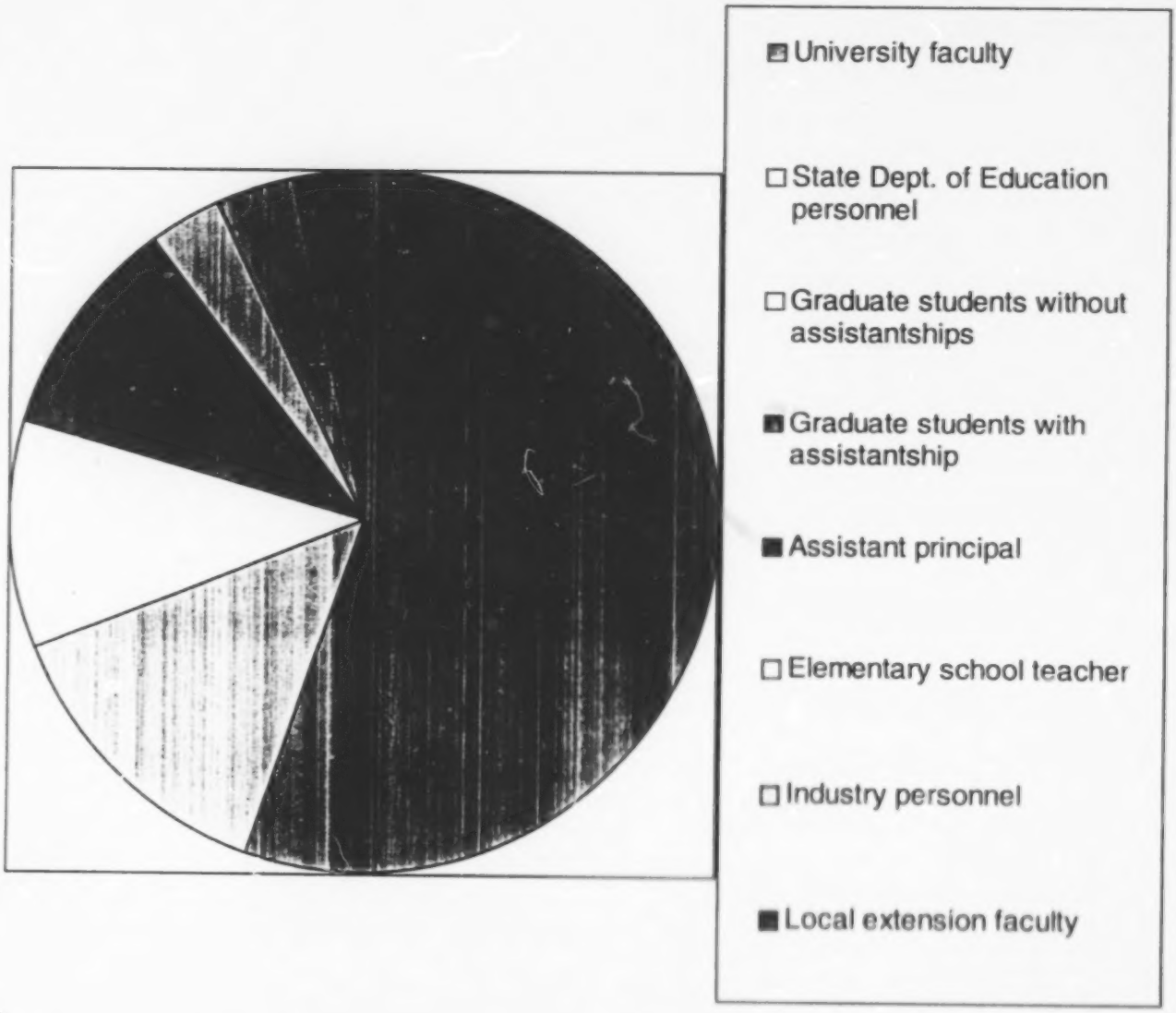
the future. The legacy of the fellowship is a significant gift toward the development future of family and consumer sciences educators.

Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	frequency	%
Sex	Female = 29 Male = 0	100% 0%
Ethnicity	Caucasian = 28 African-American = 1	96.6% 3.4%
Marital Status	Married = 21 Single = 6 Divorced = 1 Widowed = 1	72.4% 20.7% 3.4% 3.4%

Characteristic	Mean
Age	49.1
Years needed to complete program after receiving fellowship	2.5
Number of memberships per respondent	4.79

Current Positions of Fellowship Respondents



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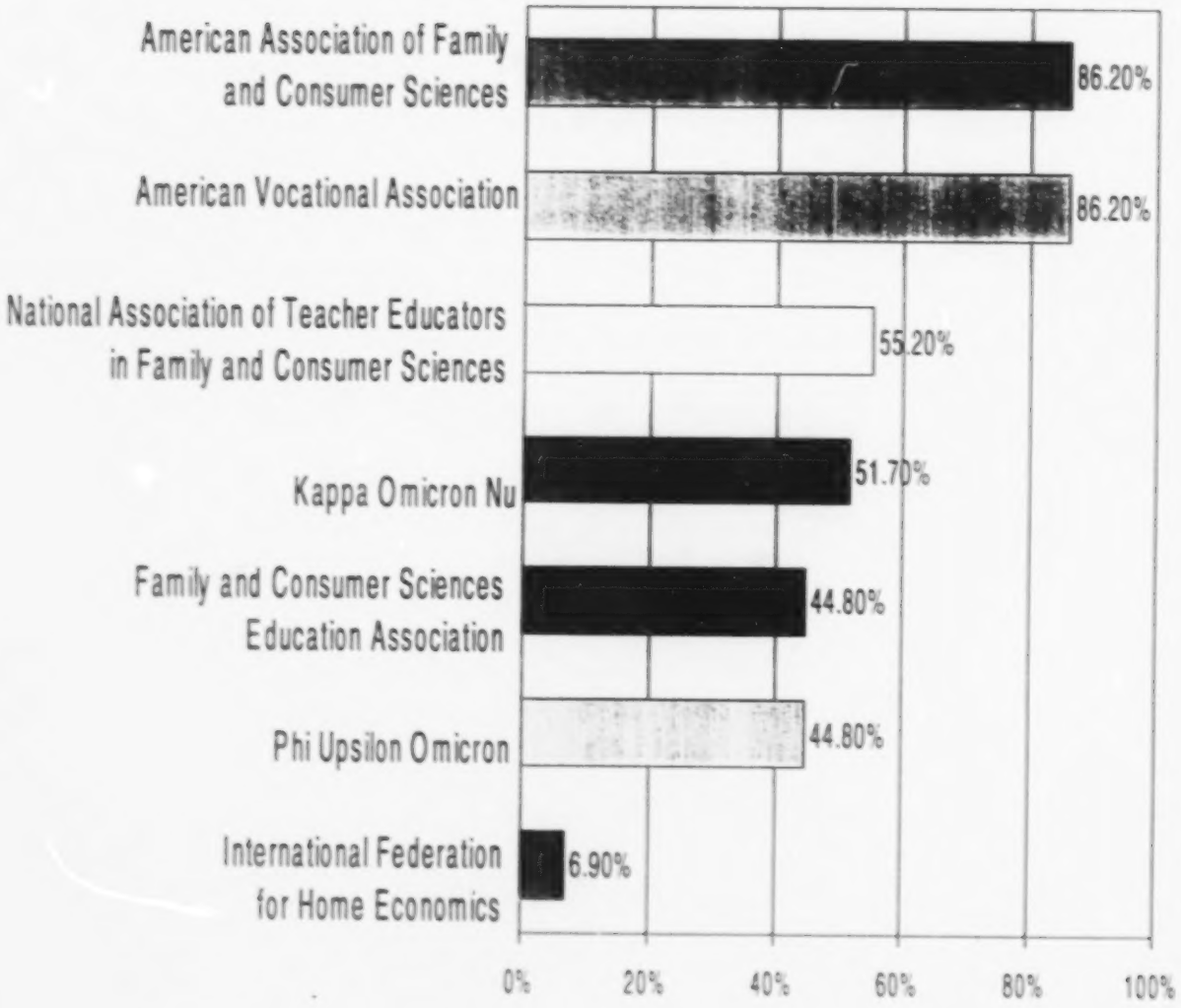
Professional Organizations Membership



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